A SERMON

Preached before the

Honourable Houſe OF COMMONS,

At St. MARGARETS WESTMINSTER Octob. 10. 1666. being the Faſt-day appointed for the late dreadfull Fire in the City of

LONDON.

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AMOS 4. 11.

I have overthrown ſome of you, as God overthrew So-dom and Gomorrah, *and ye were as a firebrand pluckt out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord.*

IT is but a very little time ſince you met together in this place to lament the remainders of a *raging peſtilence*, which the laſt year deſtroyed ſo many thouſand inhabitants of the late great and famous City: and now *God* hath given us another ſad occaſion for our *faſting* and *humiliation*, by ſuffering a *devouring fire* to break forth and conſume ſo many of her habitations. As though the infected air had been too kind and partial, and like *Saul* to the *Amalekites*, had only deſtroyed *the vile and refuſe*, and ſpared *the greateſt of the people*; as though the grave had ſurfeited with the bodies of the dead, and were loth to go on in the execution of *Gods* diſpleaſure; he hath imployed a more furious Element, which

by its mercileſs and devouring flames might in a more lively manner repreſent unto us the *kindling* of his *wrath* againſt us. And that by a *Fire*, which began with that violence, and ſpread with that horrour, and raged with that fury, & continued for ſo long a time with that irreſiſtible force; that it might juſtly fill the beholders with confuſion, the hearers of it with amazement, and all of us with a deep and humble ſenſe of thoſe ſins which have brought down the judgements of *God* in ſo ſevere a manner in the midſt of us.

For whatever arguments or reaſons we can imagine, that ſhould compoſe the minds of men to a ſenſe of their own or others calamities, or excite them to an apprehenſion of the *wrath of God* as the cauſe of them, or quicken them to an earneſt ſupplication to him for mercy, they do all eminently concurr in the ſad occaſion of this dayes ſolemnity. For if either compaſſion would move, or fear awaken, or intereſt engage us to any of theſe, it is hard to conceive there ſhould be an inſtance of a more efficacious nature, than that is which we this day bewail; For who can behold the ruines of ſo great a City, and not have his bowels of compaſsion moved towards it? Who can have any ſenſe of the anger of God diſcovered in it, and not have his fear awakened by it? Who can (as we ought all) look upon it as a judgement of univerſal influence on the whole Nation, and not think himſelf concerned to implore the mercy

mercy of Heaven towards us? For certainly, howſoever we may vainly flatter and deceive our ſelves, theſe are no common indications of the frowns of heaven; nor are they meerly intended as the expreſsions of *Gods* ſeverity towards that City which hath ſuffered ſo much by them; but the ſtroaks which fall upon the head (though they light upon that only) are deſigned for the puniſhment of the whole body.

Were there nothing elſe but a bare permiſsion of Divine Providence as to theſe things, we could not reaſonably think, but that *God* muſt needs be very angry with us, when he ſuffers two ſuch dreadful calamities to tread almoſt upon each others heels; that no ſooner had *death* taken away ſuch multitudes of our inhabitants, but a *Fire* follows it to conſume our habitations. A *Fire*, ſo dreadfull in its appearance, in its rage and fury, and in all the diſmal conſequences of it (which we cannot yet be ſufficiently apprehenſive of) that on that very account we may juſtly *lie down in our ſhame, and our confuſion cover us*: Lam. 2. 1. becauſe *God hath covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud in his anger, and caſt down from heaven to earth the beauty of* Iſrael, *and remembred not his footſtool in the day of his anger*. For ſuch was the violence and fury of the *flames*, that they have not only defaced the beauty of the City, and humbled the pride and grandeur of it; not only ſtained its glory, and conſumed its palaces; but have made the Houſes of *God* themſelves a heap of ruines, and a ſpectacle of deſolation.

And what then can we propoſe to our ſelves as arguments of *Gods* ſevere diſpleaſure againſt us, which we have not either already felt, or have juſt cauſe to fear are coming upon us without a ſpeedy and ſincere amendment? If a Sword abroad and Peſtilence at home, if Fire in our Houſes and Death in our Streets, if Forreign Wars and Domeſtick Factions, if a languiſhing State and a diſcontented People, if the ruines of the City and poverty of the Countrey, may make us ſenſible how ſad our condition at preſent is, how much worſe it may be (if *God* in his mercy prevent it not) we ſhall all ſurely think we have reaſon enough this day to lay to heart *the evil of our doings which have brought all theſe things upon us, and abhor our ſelves, repenting in duſt and aſhes.* That would ſeem indeed to bear ſome analogy with the preſent ruines of the City, and the calamities we lie under at this time; but *God* will more eaſily diſpenſe with the pompous ſhews, and ſolemn garbs of our humiliation; if our hearts bleed within for our former impieties, and our repentance diſcovers its ſincerity, by bringing us to that temper; that, *though we have done iniquity, we will do ſo no more.* That is the true and proper end, which *Almighty God* aims at, in all his Judgements: he takes no delight in hurling the world into confuſions, and turning Cities into ruinous heaps, and making whole Countries a deſolation: but when he ſees it neceſſary to vindicate the honour of his Juſtice to the world, he doth it with

with that *ſeverity* that may make us apprehend his diſpleaſure, and yet with that *mercy* which may incourage us to repent and *return unto the Lord.* Thus we find in the inſtances recorded in the Text, when ſome *Cities* were *conſumed by him*; ſo that as far as concerned them, they were made *like to Sodom and Gomorrah*: yet he doth it with that kindneſs to the *Inhabitants*, that *they are pluckt as firebrands out of the burning*: and therefore he looks upon it as a fruſtrating the deſign both of his *Juſtice*, and of his *Mercy*, when he is fain to conclude with that ſad reflection on their incorrigibleneſs; *Yet have ye not returned unto me ſaith the Lord.* Thus ye ſee what the deſign and ſcope of the words is, which I have read unto you, wherein we may conſider,

1. The ſeverity of the Judgement which God was pleaſed to execute upon them. *I have overthrown ſome of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

2. The mixture of his mercy in the midſt of his ſeverity, *and ye were as a firebrand pluckt out of the burning.*

3. The incorrigibleneſs of the people notwithſtanding both. *Yet have ye not, &c.* In the firſt we have *Gods Rod* lifted up to *ſtrike*, in the ſecond we have *Gods Hand* ſtretched out to *ſave*, yet neither of theſe would make them ſenſible of their diſobedience; though their *Cities* were *overthrown* for *their ſakes*, though they themſelves eſcaped not *for their own ſakes*, but for his *mercies ſake* only whom they had

had ſo highly provoked; *yet have ye not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord.* I am ſure I may ſay of the two former parts of the Text, as our *Saviour* doth in another caſe, *This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled among you*: we have ſeen a ſad inſtance of *Gods ſeverity*, a *City* almoſt wholly *conſumed* as *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and a great expreſsion of his kindneſs, *the Inhabitants ſaved, as firebrands pluckt out of the burning*: O let it never be ſaid that the laſt part of the words is fulfilled too, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, &c.* which, that it may not be, I ſhall firſt conſider *the ſeverity of God in his judgement* this day, and then diſcover *the mixture of his kindneſs with it*, and the reſult of both will be the *unreaſonableneſs of obſtinate diſobedience* after them.

1. *The ſeverity of the Judgement* here expreſſed: which, though we take it not in reference to the perſons of men, but to the Cities wherein they dwelt: as it ſeems to be underſtood not only by the *Original*, wherein the words relating to perſons are left out: but by the following clauſe, expreſsing their preſervation: yet we ſhall find the Judgement to be ſevere enough, in regard 1. Of the *nature and kind* of it. 2. The *ſeries and order* of it. 3. The *cauſes* moving to it. 4. The *Author* of it. *I have overthrown ſome of you, as God overthrew, &c.*

1. *The nature and kind of it*: We can imagine nothing more ſevere when we conſider what it is ſet forth by, the moſt unparalleld Judgement we read of, *viz.* the *deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* by a fire from

from Heaven. Although in all circumſtances the inſtance might not come up to the parallel, yet in ſeveral reſpects there might be ſo ſad a deſolation, that any other example but that might fall beneath the greatneſs and ſeverity of it. And we may better underſtand of how ſad and dreadfull a nature ſuch a Judgement muſt be, if we conſider it with relation to the *ſuddenneſs and unexpectedneſs* of it, to the *force* and *violence* of it, and to all that *ſad train of circumſtances* which attend and follow it.

1. *The ſuddenneſs and unexpectedneſs* of it; *as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, i. e.* when they leaſt of all looked for ſuch a deſolation. For *thus it was in the dayes of Lot* (as our *Saviour* tells us) *they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded; but the ſame day that* Lot *went out of* Sodom, *it rained fire and brimſtome from Heaven, and deſtroyed them all.* They were all immerſed either in their pleaſures or in their buſineſs, they little thought of deſtruction being ſo near them as it proved to be; Thus it was with the *Jews* in their firſt and latter deſtruction both of their City and Countrey, they were as high and as confident of the contrary as might be to the very laſt; nothing could perſwade them that their Temple or their City ſhould be burnt with *Fire*, till they ſaw them flaming before their eyes. Thus *Joſephus* obſerves of his Countrey-men, *that in the midſt of all their miſeries they had no kind of ſenſe at all of their ſins, but were as proud, preſumptuous and arrogant,*

Luke 17. 28, 29.

Ἦν γὰρ αὐτοῖς μετάνοια μὲν οὐδεμία τῶν κακῶν, ἀλαζωνεία δὲ ὡς ἐπ' ἀγαθοῖς. de bell. Jud. l. 7. c. 14.

rogant, as if all things went well with them; and were like to do so. They thought God could not possibly punish such a people as they were in such a manner; they could easily have believed it of any other people but themselves: but that *God* should punish his own people in *Covenant* with him, that Judgement should begin at the house of *God*, that they who had loved to be called by his name, should be made examples to all other Nations; this seemed so harsh & incredible that by no means could they entertain it. But *God* & Wise men too thought otherwise of them than they did of themselves: they could not but see an outward shew of Religion joyned with a deep and subtil hypocrisie; there being among them an heap of pride and luxury, of fraud and injustice, of sedition and faction guilded over with a fair shew of greater zeal for *God* and his *Glory*: which that impartial Historian (as one who knew them well) hath described at large: and although they could not believe that such heavy Judgements should befall them, yet others did not only *believe*, but *tremble* at the apprehensions of them.

Who among all the Citizens of *London* could have been perswaded, but the day before the *Fire* brake out, nay when they saw the *flames* for near a day together, that ever in four days time, not a fourth part of the City should be left standing? For when were they ever more secure & inapprehensive of their danger than at this time? they had not been long return-

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ed to their Houſes, which the *Plague* had driven them from, and now they hoped to make ſome amends for the loſs of their Trade before; but they returned home with the ſame ſins they carryed away with them; like new *Moons*, they had a new face and appearance, but the ſame *ſpots* remained ſtill: or it may be, increaſed by that *ſcumm* they had gathered in the Countries where they had been. Like Beaſts of prey that had been chained up ſo long till they were hunger-bitten, when they once got looſe they ran with that violence and greedineſs to their wayes of gain, as though nothing could ever ſatisfie them. But that which betrayed them to ſo much ſecurity, was their late deliverance from ſo ſweeping a Judgement as the *Plague* had been to the City and Suburbs of it: they could by no means think, when they had all ſo lately eſcaped the *Grave*, that the City it ſelf ſhould be ſo near being buried in its own ruines; that the *fire* which had miſſed their blood ſhould ſeize upon their houſes; that there ſhould be no other way to purge the infected air, but by the *flames* of the whole City. Thus when the Mariners have newly eſcaped a wreck at Sea, the fears of which have a long time deprived them of their wonted reſt, they think they may ſecurely lye down and ſleep, till it may be another ſtorm overtake and ſink them. We ſee then there is neither piety nor wiſdom in ſo much ſecurity when a great danger is over, for we know not but that very ſecurity it ſelf may provoke *God* to ſend a greater.

And no kind of judgements are ſo dreadful and amazing, as thoſe which come moſt unexpectedly upon men; for theſe betray the ſuccours which reaſon offers, they infatuate mens councils, weaken their courage, and deprive them of that preſence of mind which is neceſſary at ſuch a time for their own and the publick intereſt. And there needs no more to let us know how ſevere ſuch a Judgement muſt be when it comes upon men in ſo ſudden and unexpected a manner; but that is not all, for the ſeverity of it lyes further,

2. *In the force and violence of it*: and ſurely that was very great which conſumed four Cities to nothing in ſo ſhort a time, when *God* did *pluere Gehennam de cœlo* as one expreſſes it, rained down *hell-fire upon* Sodom *and* Gomorrah. And this is that which ſome think is called *the vengeance of eternal fire, which all*
Jude 7. *thoſe in* Sodom *and* Gomorrah *are ſaid to ſuffer*; i. e. *a Fire* which conſumed, till there was nothing left to be conſumed by it. Not but that thoſe wicked perſons did juſtly ſuffer the *vengeance of an eternal fire* in another life, but the *Apoſtle* ſeems to ſet out and paint forth to us that in the life to come, by the force and violence of that *fire* which deſtroyed thoſe Cities; and it would be harſh to ſay, that all who were involved in that common calamity (who yet were innocent as to the great abominations of thoſe places, *viz.* the *Infants* there deſtroyed) muſt be immediately ſentenced to eternal miſery. But although *God* ſince

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that perpetual monument of his justice in the destruction of those Cities hath not by such an immediate fire from Heaven consumed and razed out the very foundations of other Cities; yet at some times there are *fires* which break out and rage with a more than ordinary violence, and will not yield to those attempts for quenching them, which at other times may be attended with great success. Such might that great fire in *Rome* be in *Nero*'s time, which whether begun *casually*, or by *design* (which was disputed then, as it hath been about others since) did presently spread it self with greater speed over the *Cirque* (as the Historian tells us) than the *Wind* it self, and never left burning, till of fourteen *Regions* in *Rome*, but four were left entire. Such might that be in the *Emperour Titus* his time, which lasted three dayes and nights, and was so irresistible in its fury, that the Historian tells us, *it was certainly more than an ordinary fire.* Such might that be in the same City in the time of *Commodus*, which though all the art and industry imaginable were used for the quenching it, yet it burnt, till it had consumed besides the *Temple* of *Peace*, the fairest Houses and Palaces of the City, which on that account, the *Historians* attribute to more than natural causes. Such might that be (which comes the nearest of any I have met with, to that *fire* we this day lament the effects of) I mean that at *Constantinople*, which happened *A. D.* 465. in the

Tacit. An. 15.

Οὕτω τε τὸ κακὸν οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ δαιμόνιον ἐγένετο. *Xiphil. in Epit. Dion. in Tito. p.* 227.

Ὅθεν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἔργον ἐξεθειάσθη, πιστευόντων κατ' ἐκείνου καίρου τῶν τότε ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι γνώμῃ θεῶν καὶ δυνάμει ἤρξατό τε τὸ πῦρ καὶ ἐπαύσατο. *Herodian. in Commod. hist. l.* 1. *p.* 22. *v. Xiphil. ad fin. Commodi.*

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Nicepb. *l.*15.*c.*21 beginning of *September*; it brake forth by the water ſide, and raged with that horrible fury for four days together, that it burnt down the greateſt part of the City, and was ſo little capable of reſiſtance, that as *Evagr. l.* 2.*cap.*13. *Evagrius* tells us, the ſtrongeſt Houſes were but ὥσπερ τι ἐριγανῶδες, *like ſo much dryed ſtubble before it*; by which means the whole City was, as he calls it, ἐλεεινότατον θέαμα, *a moſt miſerable and doleful ſpectacle*; ſo *Baron. Tom.* 5. *A.*465.1 that as *Baronius* expreſſes it, *that City which before was accounted the wonder of the world, was made like to* Sodom *and* Gomorrah. Such likewiſe might thoſe two great *fires* have been which have formerly burnt down great part of the then City of *London*; but neither of them come near the dreadfulneſs of this, conſidering how much bigger the habitations of the City were now, and how much greater the riches of it then could be imagined at thoſe times. How great muſt we conceive the force of this Fire to have been, which having at firſt gotten a head where there was little means of reſiſting it, and much fuel to increaſe it; from thence it ſpread it ſelf both with and againſt the wind; till it had gained ſo conſiderable a force, that it deſpiſed all the reſiſtance could be made by the ſtrength of the buildings which ſtood in its way; and when it had once ſubdued the ſtrongeſt and the talleſt of them, it then roared like the waves of the ſea, and made its way through all the leſſer obſtacles, and might have gone on ſo far, till it had laid this *City* levell with the ruines of the other, had not he who

who ſets the bounds to the *Ocean*, and ſaith, *thus far ſhalt thou go and no further*, put a ſtop to it in thoſe places which were as ready to have yielded up themſelves to the rage of it, as any which had been conſumed before.

3. The ſeverity of it will yet more appear from all *the dreadful circumſtances which attend and follow it.* Could you ſuppoſe your ſelves in the midſt of thoſe Cities which were conſumed by *Fire* from heaven, when it had ſeized upon their dwellings, O what cryes and lamentations, what yellings and ſhriekings might ye then have heard among them! We may well think how dreadful thoſe were, when we do but conſider how ſad the circumſtances were of the *fire* we mourn for this day. When it began like *Sampſon* to break in pieces all the means of reſiſting it, and carryed before it not only the *Gates*, but the *Churches* and moſt *magnificent ſtructures* of the *City*, what horrour and confuſion may we then imagine had ſeized upon the ſpirits of the *Citizens*; what diſtraction in their councils, what paleneſs in their countenances, what pantings at their hearts, what an univerſal conſternation might have been then ſeen upon the minds of men? But O the ſighs and tears, the frights and amazements, the miſcarriages, nay the deaths of ſome of the weaker Sex at the terrour and apprehenſion of it! O the hurry and uſeleſs pains, the alarms and tumults, the mutual hinderances of each other that were among men at the beholding

holding the rage and fury of it! There we might have ſeen Women weeping for their children, for fear of their being trod down in the preſs, or loſt in the crowd of people, or expoſed to the violence of the flames; Husbands more ſolicitous for the ſafety of their Wives and Children, than their own; the Souldiers running to their ſwords, when there was more need of Buckets; the Tradeſmen loading their backs with that which had gotten poſſeſſion of their hearts before. Then we might have heard ſome complaining thus of themſelves: O that I had been as carefull of laying up treaſures in Heaven as I have been upon Earth, I had not been under ſuch fears of loſing them as now I am! If I had ſerved *God* as faithfully as I have done the world, he would never have left me as now that is like to do. What a fool have I been which have ſpent all my pretious time for the gaining of that which may be now loſt in an hours time! If theſe flames be ſo dreadful, what are thoſe which are reſerved for them who love the world more than *God*! If none can come near the *heat* of this *Fire*, who can dwell with *everlaſting burnings*! O what madneſs then will it be to ſin any more wilfully againſt that *God* who is *a conſuming fire*, infinitely more dreadful than this can be! Farewell then all ye deceitful vanities: now I underſtand thee and my ſelf better, O bewitching world, then to fix my happineſs in thee any more. I will henceforth learn ſo much wiſdom to lay up my treaſures there

there where neither moths can corrupt them, nor Thieves ſteal them, nor Fire conſume them. O how happy would *London* be, if this were the effect of her flames on the minds of all her inhabitants! She might then riſe with a greater glory, and her inward beauty would outſhine her outward ſplendour, let it be as great as we can wiſh or imagine.

But in the mean time who can behold her preſent ruines, without paying ſome tears as due to the ſadneſs of the ſpectacle, and more to the ſins which cauſed them? If that City were able to ſpeak out of its ruines, what ſad complaints would it make of all thoſe impieties which have made her ſo miſerable. If it had not been (might ſhe ſay) for the pride and luxury, the eaſe and delicacy of ſome of my inhabitants, the covetouſneſs, the fraud, the injuſtice of others, the debaucheries of the prophane, the open factions and ſecret hypocriſie of too many pretending to greater ſanctity, my *beauty* had not been thus *turned into aſhes*, nor my glory into thoſe ruines which make my enemies rejoyce, my friends to mourn, and all ſtand amazed at the beholding of them. Look now upon me, you who ſo lately admired the greatneſs of my trade, the riches of my Merchants, the number of my people, the conveniency of my *Churches*, the multitude of my Streets, and ſee what deſolations ſin hath made in the earth. Look upon me, and then tell me whether it be nothing to dally with Heaven, to make a mock at ſin, to ſlight the judge-

ments of *God*, and abuſe his mercies, and after all the attempts of Heaven to reclaim a people from their ſins, to remain ſtill the ſame that ever they were? Was there no way to expiate your guilt but by my miſery? Had the *Leproſie* of your ſins ſo fretted into my Walls, that there was no cleanſing them, but by the flames which conſume them? Muſt I mourn in *my duſt and aſhes* for your iniquities, while you are ſo ready to return to the practice of them? Have I ſuffered ſo much by reaſon of *them*, and do you think to eſcape your ſelves? Can you then look upon my ruines with hearts as hard and unconcerned as the *ſtones* which lye in them? If you have any kindneſs for me, or for your ſelves, if you ever hope to ſee my breaches repaired, my beauty reſtored, my glory advanced, look on *Londons* ruines and *repent*. Thus would ſhe bid her inhabitants not weep for her miſeries, but for their own ſins; for if *never any ſorrow were like to her ſorrow*, it is becauſe never any ſins were like to their ſins. Not as though they were only the ſins of the City, which have brought this evil upon her; no, but as far as the judgement reaches, ſo great hath the compaſs of the ſins been, which have provoked *God* to make her an example of his juſtice. And I fear the effects of *Londons* calamity will be felt all the Nation over. For, conſidering the preſent languiſhing condition of this Nation, it will be no eaſie matter to recover the *blood* and *ſpirits* which have been loſt by this *Fire*. So that whether we conſider

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the ſadneſs of thoſe circumſtances which accompanied the rage of the fire, or thoſe which reſpect the preſent miſeries of the City, or the general influence thoſe will have upon the Nation, we cannot eaſily conceive what judgement could in ſo *critical* a time have befallen us, which had been more ſevere for the *kind* and *nature* of it, than this hath been.

2. We conſider it *in the ſeries and order of it.* We ſee by the *Text*, this comes in the laſt place, as a reſerve, when nothing elſe would do any good upon them: It is *extrema medicina*, as S^t. *Hierom* ſaith, the laſt attempt that *God* uſes to reclaim a people by, and if theſe *Cauſticks* will not do, it is to be feared he looks on the wounds as incurable. He had ſent a *famine* before, v. 6. a *drought*, v. 7, 8. *blaſting and mildew*, v. 9. *the Peſtilence after the manner of Egypt*, v. 10. *the miſeries of War* in the ſame *verſe*. And when none of theſe would work that effect upon them, which they were deſigned for, then he comes to this laſt way of puniſhing before a final deſtruction, *he overthrew ſome of their Cities as he had overthrown* Sodom *and* Gomorrah. *God* forbid, we ſhould be ſo near a final ſubverſion, and utter deſolation, as the ten Tribes were, when none of theſe things would bring them to repentance; but yet the method *God* hath uſed with us ſeems to *bode* very ill in caſe we do not at laſt *return to the Lord*. For it is not only agreeable to what is here delivered as the courſe *God* uſed to reclaim the *Iſraelites*, but to what is reported by the moſt faithfull *Hiſtorian* *Hieron. in loc.*

Hiſtorian of thoſe times of the degrees and ſteps that God made before the ruines of the *Britiſh Nation*. For *Gildas* tells us the decay of it began by *Civil Wars* among themſelves, and *high diſcontents* remaining as the conſequents of them, after this an *univerſal decay and poverty* among them; after that, nay during the continuance of it, *Wars* with the *Picts* and *Scots* their inveterate enemies; but no ſooner had they a little breathing ſpace, but they return to their luxury and other ſins again; then *God* ſends among them *a conſuming Peſtilence*, which deſtroyed an incredible number of people. When all this would not do, thoſe whom they truſted moſt to, betrayed them, and rebelled againſt them, by whoſe means, not only *the Cities were burnt with Fire*, but the whole *Iſland* was turned almoſt into *one continued flame*. The iſſue of all which at laſt was, that their *Countrey* was turned to a deſolation, the ancient *Inhabitants* driven out, or deſtroyed, and their former ſervants, but now their bitter enemies, *poſſeſſing* their *habitations*. May *God* avert the *Omen* from us at this day. We have ſmarted by *Civil Wars*, and the dreadful *effects* of them: we yet complain of *great diſcontents* and *poverty* as great as them, we have *inveterate enemies* combined abroad againſt us, we have very lately ſuffered under a *Peſtilence* as great almoſt as any we read of, and now the *great City* of our *Nation burnt down by a dreadful Fire*. And what do all theſe things mean? and what will the iſſue of them be? though that be lockt up in the

Gildas de excid. Brit.

Councils

Councils of *Heaven*, yet we have juſt cauſe to fear, if it be not our ſpeedy amendment, it may be our ruine. And they who think that incredible, let them tell me whether two years ſince, they did not think it altogether as improbable, that in the compaſs of the two ſucceeding years, above *a hundred thouſand perſons* ſhould be deſtroyed by the *Plague* in *London* and other places, and the City it ſelf ſhould be burnt to the *Ground*? And if our *fears* do not, I am ſure our *ſins* may tell us, that theſe are but the fore-runners of greater calamities, in caſe there be not a timely reformation of our ſelves. And although *God* may give us ſome intermiſſions of puniſhments, yet at laſt he may, as the *Roman Conſul* expreſſed it, pay us *intercalatæ pœnæ uſuram*, that which may make amends for all his abatements, and give us full meaſure according to that of our ſins, *preſſed down, ſhaken together, and running over*. Which leads to the third particular.

3. *The cauſes moving God to ſo much ſeverity in his Judgements*, which are the greatneſs of the *ſins* committed againſt him. So this *Prophet* tels us, that the true account of all *Gods* puniſhments is to be fetched from the *ſins* of the *people*, Amos 1. 3. *For three tranſgreſſions of* Damaſcus, *and for four I will not turn away the puniſhment thereof*: ſo it is ſaid of *Gaza*, *v.* 6. of *Tyrus*, *v.* 9. of *Edom*, *v.* 11. of *Ammon*, *v.* 13. *Moab*, ch. 2. 1. *Judah*, *v.* 4. and at laſt *Iſrael*, *v.* 6. And it is obſervable of every one of theſe, that when *God* threatens to puniſh them for the *greatneſs* of their *iniquities*, and

the *multitude* of their *tranſgreſſions*, (which is generally ſuppoſed to be meant by the *three tranſgreſſions and the four*) he doth particularly threaten to ſend a *fire* among them to conſume the Houſes and the Palaces of their Cities. So to *Damaſcus*, chap. 1. 4. to *Gaza*, v. 7. to *Tyrus*, v. 10. to *Edom*, v. 12. to *Ammon*, v. 14. to *Moab*, ch. 2. v. 2. to *Judah*, v. 5. *I will ſend a fire upon* Judah, *and it ſhall devour the Palaces of Jeruſalem*: and *Iſrael* in the words of the text. This is a judgement then, which when it comes in its *fury*, gives us notice to how great a height our ſins are riſen; eſpecially when it hath ſo many dreadful fore-runners, as it had in *Iſrael*, and hath had among our ſelves. When the *red horſe* hath marched furiouſly before it all *bloody* with the *effects* of a *Civil War*, and the *pale horſe* hath followed after the other with *Death* upon his back, and the *Grave* at his heels, and after both theſe, thoſe come, *out of whoſe mouth iſſues fire, and ſmoak, and brimſtone*, it is then time for the inhabitants of the earth, *to repent of the work of their hands*. But it is our great unhappineſs that we are apt to impute theſe great calamities to any thing rather than to our *ſins*; and thereby we hinder our ſelves from the true remedy, becauſe we will not underſtand the cauſe of our diſtemper. Though *God* hath not ſent *Prophets* among us, to tell us for ſuch and ſuch ſins, I will ſend ſuch and ſuch judgements upon you, yet where we obſerve the parallel between the *ſins* and the *punishments* agreeable with what we find recorded in *Scripture*,

we

we have reaſon to ſay that thoſe ſins were not only the *antecedents*, but the *cauſes* of thoſe puniſhments which followed after them. And that becauſe the reaſon of puniſhment was not built upon any particular relation between *God* and the people of *Iſrael*, but upon reaſons common to all mankind; yet with this difference, that the greater the mercies were which any people enjoyed, the ſooner was the meaſure of their iniquities filled up, and the ſeverer were the judgements when they came upon them. This our *Prophet* gives an account of, Chap. 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the Nations of the earth, therefore will I puniſh you for your iniquities.* So did *God* puniſh *Tyre* and *Damaſcus*, as well as *Iſrael* and *Judah*; but his meaning is, he would puniſh them ſooner, he would puniſh them more ſeverely. I wiſh we could be brought once to conſider what influence *piety* and *vertue* hath upon the good of a Nation, if we did, we ſhould not only live better our ſelves, but our *Kingdom* & *Nation* might flouriſh more than otherwiſe we are like to ſee it do. Which is a truth hath been ſo univerſally received among the wiſe Men of all ages, that one of the *Roman Hiſtorians*, though of no very ſevere life himſelf, yet imputes the decay of the *Roman State*, not to Chance or Fortune, or ſome unhidden cauſes (which the *Atheiſm* of our age would preſently do) but to the general looſneſs of mens lives, and corruption of their manners. And it was the grave Obſervation of one of the braveſt *Captains* ever the

Roman

Scipio apud Aug. de Civ. D. l. 1. c. 33.

Roman State had, *that it was impoſsible for any State to be happy, ſtantibus mœnibus, ruentibus moribus, though their walls were firm, if their manners were decayed.* But it is our miſery, that our walls and our manners are fallen together, or rather the latter undermined the former. They are our *ſins* which have drawn ſo much of our blood, and infected our air, and added the greateſt fuell to our flames.

But it is not enough in general to declaim againſt our *ſins*, but we muſt ſearch out particularly thoſe predominant vices, which by their *boldneſs* and *frequency* have provoked *God* thus to puniſh us; and as we have hitherto obſerved a parallel between the *Judgements* of *Iſrael* in this Chapter, and our *own*: So I am afraid we ſhall find too ſad a parallel between *their ſins* and *ours* too. Three ſorts of *ſins* are here ſpoken of in a peculiar manner, as the cauſes of their ſevere puniſhments, Their *luxury and intemperance*, their *covetouſneſs and oppreſsion*, and *their contempt of God and his Laws*, and I doubt we need not make a very exact *ſcrutiny* to find out theſe in a high degree among our ſelves: and I wiſh it were as eaſie to reform them, as to find them out.

1. *Luxury and intemperance*; that we meet with in the firſt verſe, both in the compellation, *Ye Kine of* Baſhan, and in their behaviour, *which ſay to their Maſters, bring, and let us drink. Ye Kine of* Baſhan, *Loquitur ad principes Iſrael & optimates quoſque decem Tribuum*, ſaith *S^t. Hierom*, he ſpeaks to the *Princes of* Iſrael,

Iſrael, *and the chief of all the ten Tribes*; Thoſe which are fed in the richeſt paſtures, ſuch as thoſe of *Baſhan* were. Who are more fully deſcribed by the *Prophet* in his ſixth chapter. They are the men *who are at eaſe in Sion*, v. 1. *they put far away from them the evil day*, v. 3. *they lye upon beds of Ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their couches, and eat the Lambs out of the flock, and the Calves out of the midſt of the ſtall*, v. 4. *they chaunt to the ſound of the Viol, and invent to themſelves inſtruments of muſick like* David, v. 5. *they drink Wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the chief oyntments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of* Joſeph. The meaning of all which is, they minded nothing but eaſe, ſoftneſs, and pleaſure, but could not endure to hear of the calamities which were ſo near them. Nothing but mirth, and jollity, and riot, and feaſting, and the evil conſequences of theſe were to be ſeen or heard among them. Their delicate ſouls were preſently ruffled and diſturbed at the diſcourſe of any thing but matters of Courtſhip, addreſs and entertainment. Any thing that was grave and ſerious, though never ſo neceſſary, and of the greateſt importance, was put off, as *Felix* put off S^t. *Paul* to a more convenient time: eſpecially if it threatned miſeries to them, and appeared with a countenance ſadder than their own. Theſe were the *Kine of Baſhan*, who were full of eaſe and wantonneſs, and never thought of the *day* of *ſlaughter*, which the other were the certain forerunners of. *Symmachus* renders it, ἀι βόες ἐκεῖναι,

which others apply to *the rich Citizens of Samaria*, I am afraid we may take it in either ſenſe without a *Solœciſm*. *Bring and let us drink*, which as S^t. *Hierom* goes on, *ebrietatem ſignificat in vino & luxuria quæ ſtatum mentis evertunt, it implies the height of their luxury and intemperance.* It is obſerved by ſome, that our *Prophet* retains ſtill the language of his education in the bluntneſs of his expreſsions, *the great men* that lived *wholly* at their *eaſe*, in wantonneſs and luxury, he ſtyles like *the heardſman of* Tekoa, *the* Kine *of* Baſhan. That he thought was title good enough for ſuch who ſeemed to have *ſouls* for no other end, than the other had. And hath not that *delicata inſania*, as S^t. *Auſtin* calls it, that ſoft and effeminate kind of madneſs taken poſſeſsion of too many among us, whoſe birth and education deſigned them for more manly imployments? yea, what an age of *Luxury* do we live in, when inſtead of thoſe noble characters of men from their vertue, and wiſdom, and courage, it is looked on among ſome as a mighty character of a perſon, that *he eats and drinks well* : a *character* that becomes none ſo much as the Kine of *Baſhan* in the literal ſenſe, for ſurely they did ſo, or elſe they had never been in ſo much eſteem among the *heardſmen of Tekoa*. A *character* which thoſe *Philoſophers* would have been aſhamed of, who looked upon no other end of humane life but *pleaſure*; but in order to that, they thought nothing more neceſſary than *temperance* and *ſobriety*; but whatever eſteem they had then, they

they have loſt all their reputation among our modern *Epicures*, who know of no ſuch things as *pleaſures of the mind*, and would not much value whether they had any *faculties* of the *mind* or no, unleſs it were for the contrivance of new oaths and debaucheries. But if this were only among ſome few perſons, we hope the whole Nation would not ſuffer for their madneſs: for ſcarce any age hath been ſo happy, but it hath had ſome *monſters* in *Morality* as well as *Nature*. But I am afraid theſe vices are grown too *Epidemical*; not only in the *City*, but the *Countries* too; what mean elſe thoſe frequent complaints (and I hope more general then the cauſes of them) that the houſes of *great men* in too many places are ſo near being *publick ſchools* of *debauchery*, rather than of *piety* and *vertue*, where men ſhall not want inſtructers to teach them to *forget* both *God* and *themſelves*; wherein *ſobriety* is ſo far from being accounted a matter of *honour*, that the rules of the *Perſian* civility are quite forgotten, and *men* are *forced* to *unman* themſelves. I know nothing would tend more to the honour of our Nation, or the advantage of it, then if once theſe publick exceſſes were ſeverely reſtrained, I do not mean ſo much by making new *Laws*, (for thoſe generally do but exerciſe peoples Wits by finding out new evaſions) but by executing old ones.

2. *Covetouſneſs and oppreſſion.* You ſee what theſe great men in *Samaria* did when they had any reſpite from their exceſſes and intemperance, then woe be

to the poor who come in their way; *Which oppreſs the poor, and crush the needy*: v. 1. either by the hands of violence, or by thoſe arts and devices which either their honeſty or poverty have kept them from the knowledge of. And if there be not ſo much of open violence in our dayes, the thanks are due to the care of our *Magiſtrates*, and the ſeverity of our *Laws*, but it is hard to ſay whether ever any age produced more ſtudious and skilful to pervert the deſign of *Laws*, without breaking the letter of them, than this of ours hath done. Fraud and injuſtice is now managed with a great deal of artifice and cunning; and he thinks himſelf no body in the underſtanding of the world, that cannot over-reach his Brother, and not be diſcovered: or however in the multiplicity and obſcurity of our *Laws* cannot find out ſomething in pretence at leaſt to juſtifie his actions by. But if appeal be made to the *Courts* of *Judicature*, what arts are then uſed either for concealing or hiring witneſſes, ſo that if their Purſes be not equal, the adverſe party may overſwear him by ſo much as his Purſe is weightier than the others. I heartily wiſh it may never be ſaid of us, what the *Orator* once ſaid of the *Greeks*, *quibus jusjurandum jocus, teſtimonium ludus*, they made it *a matter of jeſt and drollery to forſwear themſelves, and give falſe teſtimonies*. But ſuppoſing men keep within the bounds of juſtice and common honeſty, yet how unſatiable are the deſires of men? they are for adding *houſe to houſe*, and *land to land*, never contented with

Cicer. pro Flacco.

with what either their Anceſtors have left them, or the bountiful hand of Heaven hath beſtowed upon them. Till at laſt it may be in the *Prophets* expreſsion *for their covetouſneſs, the ſtone cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber anſwer it*; i. e. provoke God to give a ſevere check to the exorbitant and boundleſs deſires of men, as he hath done by this dayes calamity. Thus while *the City* thought with *Babylon to ſit as a Lady for ever, while ſhe dwelt careleſly, and ſaid I am, and there is none elſe beſides me; evil is come upon her, and ſhe knows not from whence it comes, and miſchief is fallen upon her, and ſhe hath not been able to put it off, and deſolation is come upon her ſuddenly, which ſhe did not foreſee.* Hab. 2. 11. Iſa. 47. 7, 8, 11.

3. *Contempt of God and his Laws.* That we read of *v* 4. where the *Prophet* ſpeaks by an *Irony* to them, *Come to* Bethel *and tranſgreſs*, &c. he knew well enough they were reſolved to do it, let *God* or the *Prophet* ſay what they pleaſed. For theſe *Kine of* Baſhan were all for the *Calves* of *Dan* and *Bethel*, and ſome think that is the reaſon of the title that is given them. Theſe great men of *Samaria* thought it beneath them to own *Religion* any further than it was ſubſervient to their civil intereſts. They were all of *Jeroboams Religion*, who looked on it as a meer *politick thing*, and fit to advance his own deſigns by. I am afraid there are too many at this day who are ſecretly of his mind, and think it a piece of *wiſdom* to be ſo: *Bleſſed God*, that men ſhould be ſo wiſe to deceive themſelves, and go down with ſo much diſcretion

to Hell! Theſe are the Grave and retired *Atheiſts*, who, though they ſecretly love not *Religion*, yet their caution hinders them from talking much againſt it. But there is a ſort of men much more common than the other; the faculties of whoſe minds are ſo thin and aiery, that they will not bear the conſideration of any thing, much leſs of *Religion*; theſe throw out their bitter ſcoffs, and prophane jeſts againſt it. A thing never permitted that I know of in any civilized Nation in the world; whatſoever their *Religion* was, the reputation of *Religion* was alwayes preſerved ſacred: *God* himſelf would not ſuffer the *Jews* to ſpeak evil of other *Gods* though they were to deſtroy all thoſe who tempted them to the worſhip of them. And ſhall we ſuffer the moſt excellent and reaſonable *Religion* in the world, *viz.* the *Chriſtian*, to be profaned by the unhallowed mouths of any who will venture to be damned, to be accounted witty? If their enquiries were deeper, their reaſon ſtronger, or their arguments more perſwaſive, than of thoſe who have made it their utmoſt care and buſineſs to ſearch into theſe things, they ought to be allowed a fair hearing; but for men who pretend to none of theſe things, yet ſtill to make Religion the object of their *ſcoffs* and *raillery*, doth not become the gravity of a Nation profeſſing wiſdom to permit it, much leſs the ſobriety of a people profeſsing *Chriſtianity*. In the mean time ſuch perſons may know that wiſe men may be argued out of a *Religion* they own, but none

none but *Fools* and *mad men* will be *droll'd* out of it. Let them firſt try whether they can laugh men out of their Eſtates, before they attempt to do it out of their hopes of an eternal happineſs. And I am ſure it will be no comfort to them in another world, that they were accounted *Wits* for deriding thoſe miſeries which they then feel and ſmart under the ſeverity of: it will be no *mitigation* of their *flames* that they go *laughing* into them; nor will they endure them the better becauſe they would not believe them. But while this is ſo prevailing a *humour* among the vain men of this Age and Nation, what can we expect but that *God* ſhould by remarkable and ſevere judgements, ſeek to make men more ſerious in *Religion*, or elſe make their *hearts to ake*, and their *joynts to tremble*, as he did *Belſhazzars*, when he could find nothing elſe to carouſe in but the *veſſels* of the *Temple*. And when men ſaid in the Prophet *Zephany*, chap. 1. 12. *that God neither did good nor evil*, preſently it follows, *therefore their goods ſhall become a booty, and their houſes a deſolation: the day of the Lord is near, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and diſtreſs, a day of waſteneſs and deſolation*; as it is with us at this time. Thus we ſee how ſad the parallel hath been not only in the *judgements* of *Iſrael*, but in the *ſins* likewiſe which have made thoſe judgements ſo ſevere. Zeph. 1. 13, 14, 15.

4. The ſeverity of the judgement appears not only from the *Cauſes*, but from the *Author* of it. *I have overthrown ſome of you as God overthrew* Sodom

and

and Gomorrah. *God* challenges the execution of his juſtice to himſelf, not only in the great day, but in
Amos 3 6. his judgement here in the world. *Shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* When *God* is pleaſed to puniſh men for their ſins, the execution of his juſtice is as agreeable to his nature now, as it will be at the end of the world. We all know that he may do it if he pleaſe, and he hath told us, that *he doth* and *will do it*; and we know withall, that without ſuch remarkable ſeverities, the world will hardly be kept in any awe of him. We do not find that love doth ſo much in the world as fear doth, there being ſo very few perſons of tractable and ingenuous
Lact. l. 2. c. 11. ſpirits. It is true of too many, what *Lactantius* obſerves of the *Romans*, *Nunquam Dei meminerunt, niſi dum in malis ſunt, they ſeldom think of God, but when they are afraid of him.* And there is not only this reaſon as to particular perſons why *God* ſhould puniſh them, but there is a greater as to communities, and bodies of men; for although *God* ſuffers wicked men to eſcape puniſhment here, as he often doth; yet he is ſure not to do it in the life to come; but communities of men can never be puniſhed but in this world; and therefore the juſtice of *God* doth often diſcover it ſelf in theſe common calamities, to keep the world in ſubjection to him, and to let men ſee that neither the *multitude* of their *aſſociates*, nor the *depth* of their *deſigns*, nor the *ſubtilty* of their *Councils* can ſecure them from the omnipotent arm of Divine

Divine Juſtice, when he hath determined *to viſit their tranſgreſſions with rods*, and *their iniquities with ſtripes*. But when he doth all this, yet his *loving kindneſs doth he not utterly take from them*: for in the midſt of all his judgements he is pleaſed to remember mercy; of which we have a remarkable inſtance in the Text, for when *God* was overthrowing Cities, yet *he pluckt the inhabitants as firebrands out of the burning*: and ſo I come from the *ſeverity* of *God*,

2. To the mixture of his mercy in it. *And ye were as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning*. That notes two things, *the nearneſs they were in to the danger*, and *the unexpectedneſs of their deliverance out of it*.

1. *The nearneſs they were in to the danger*, *quaſi torris, cujus jam magna pars abſumpta eſt*, as ſome *Paraphraſe* it; *like a brand, the greateſt part of which is already conſumed by Fire*; which ſhews the difficulty of their eſcaping. So *Joſhua* is ſaid to be a *brand pluckt out of the fire*, *Zech.* 3. 2. And to this *St. Hierom* upon this place, applyes that difficult paſſage, 1 *Cor.* 3. 15. *they ſhall be ſaved, but ſo as by Fire*, noting the greatneſs of the danger they were in, and how hardly they ſhould eſcape. And are not all the inhabitants of this City, and all of us in the ſuburbs of the other, whoſe houſes *eſcaped* ſo near the *flames*, as *Firebrands pluckt out of the burning*? When the fire came on in its rage and fury, as though it would in a ſhort time have devoured all before it, that not only this whole *City*, but ſo great a part of the *Suburbs* of the other ſhould

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ſolved to let the world ſee, there could be a more unthankful and diſobedient people than the *Jews* had been. Thus we ſinned with as much ſecurity and confidence, as though we had blinded the eyes, or bribed the juſtice, or commanded the power of Heaven: When *God* of a ſudden like one highly provoked drew forth the ſword of his deſtroying *Angel*, and by it cut off ſo many thouſands in the midſt of us. Then we fell upon our knees, and begg'd the mercy of Heaven that our lives might be ſpared, that we might have time to amend them: but no ſooner did our fears abate, but our devotion did ſo too, we had ſoon forgotten the promiſes we made in the day of our diſtreſs, and I am afraid it is at this day too true of us which is ſaid in the *Revelations* of thoſe who had eſcaped the ſeveral plagues which ſo many had been deſtroyed by. *And the reſt of the men which were not killed by theſe Plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands.* Rev. 9. 20. For if we had not greedily ſuckt in again the poiſon we had only laid down while we were begging for our lives, if we had not returned with as great fury and violence as ever to our former luſts, the removing of one judgement had not been as it were only to make way for the coming on of another. For the *grave* ſeemed to cloſe up her mouth, and *death* by degrees to withdraw himſelf, that the *Fire might* come upon the *Stage*, to act its part too in the *Tragœdy* our ſins have made among us: and I pray *God* this may be the

which others apply to *the rich Citizens of Samaria*, I am afraid we may take it in either ſenſe without a *Solœciſm*. *Bring and let us drink*, which as S^t. *Hierom* goes on, *ebrietatem ſignificat in vino & luxuria quæ ſtatum mentis evertunt*, *it implies the height of their luxury and intemperance*. It is obſerved by ſome, that our *Prophet* retains ſtill the language of his education in the bluntneſs of his expreſsions, *the great men* that lived *wholly* at their *eaſe*, in wantonneſs and luxury, he ſtyles like *the heardſman of* Tekoa, *the* Kine *of* Baſhan. That he thought was title good enough for ſuch who ſeemed to have *ſouls* for no other end, than the other had. And hath not that *delicata inſania*, as S^t. *Auſtin* calls it, that ſoft and effeminate kind of madneſs taken poſſeſsion of too many among us, whoſe birth and education deſigned them for more manly imployments? yea, what an age of *Luxury* do we live in, when inſtead of thoſe noble characters of men from their vertue, and wiſdom, and courage, it is looked on among ſome as a mighty character of a perſon, that *he eats and drinks well* : a *character* that becomes none ſo much as the Kine of *Baſhan* in the literal ſenſe, for ſurely they did ſo, or elſe they had never been in ſo much eſteem among the *heardſmen of Tokoa*. A *character* which thoſe *Philoſophers* would have been aſhamed of, who looked upon no other end of humane life but *pleaſure*; but in order to that, they thought nothing more neceſſary than *temperance* and *ſobriety*; but whatever eſteem they had then,

they

they have loſt all their reputation among our modern *Epicures*, who know of no ſuch things as *pleaſures of the mind*, and would not much value whether they had any *faculties* of the *mind* or no, unleſs it were for the contrivance of new oaths and debaucheries. But if this were only among ſome few perſons, we hope the whole Nation would not ſuffer for their madneſs: for ſcarce any age hath been ſo happy, but it hath had ſome *monſters* in *Morality* as well as *Nature*. But I am afraid theſe vices are grown too *Epidemical*; not only in the *City*, but the *Countries* too; what mean elſe thoſe frequent complaints (and I hope more general then the cauſes of them) that the houſes of *great men* in too many places are ſo near being *publick ſchools* of *debauchery*, rather than of *piety* and *vertue*, where men ſhall not want inſtructers to teach them to *forget* both *God* and *themſelves*; wherein *ſobriety* is ſo far from being accounted a matter of *honour*, that the rules of the *Perſian* civility are quite forgotten, and *men* are *forced* to *unman* themſelves. I know nothing would tend more to the honour of our Nation, or the advantage of it, then if once theſe publick exceſſes were ſeverely reſtrained, I do not mean ſo much by making new *Laws*, (for thoſe generally do but exerciſe peoples Wits by finding out new evaſions) but by executing old ones.

2. *Covetouſneſs and oppreſſion.* You ſee what theſe great men in *Samaria* did when they had any reſpite from their exceſſes and intemperance, then woe be

to the poor who come in their way; *Which oppreſs the poor, and crush the needy*: v. 1. either by the hands of violence, or by thoſe arts and devices which either their honeſty or poverty have kept them from the knowledge of. And if there be not ſo much of open violence in our dayes, the thanks are due to the care of our *Magiſtrates*, and the ſeverity of our *Laws*, but it is hard to ſay whether ever any age produced more ſtudious and skilful to pervert the deſign of *Laws*, without breaking the letter of them, than this of ours hath done. Fraud and injuſtice is now managed with a great deal of artifice and cunning; and he thinks himſelf no body in the underſtanding of the world, that cannot over-reach his Brother, and not be diſcovered: or however in the multiplicity and obſcurity of our *Laws* cannot find out ſomething in pretence at leaſt to juſtifie his actions by. But if appeal be made to the *Courts* of *Judicature*, what arts are then uſed either for concealing or hiring witneſſes, ſo that if their Purſes be not equal, the adverſe party may overſwear him by ſo much as his Purſe is weightier than the others. I heartily wiſh it may never be ſaid of us, what the *Orator* once ſaid of the *Greeks, quibus jusjurandum jocus, teſtimonium ludus*, they made it *a matter of jeſt and drollery to forſwear themſelves, and give falſe teſtimonies*. But ſuppoſing men keep within the bounds of juſtice and common honeſty, yet how unſatiable are the deſires of men? they are for adding *houſe to houſe*, and *land to land*, never contented with

Cicer. pro Flacco.

with what either their Anceſtors have left them, or the bountiful hand of Heaven hath beſtowed upon them. Till at laſt it may be in the *Prophets* expreſsion *for their covetouſneſs, the ſtone cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber anſwer it*; i. e. provoke God to give a ſevere check to the exorbitant and boundleſs deſires of men, as he hath done by this dayes calamity. Thus while *the City* thought with *Babylon to ſit as a Lady for ever, while ſhe dwelt careleſly, and ſaid I am, and there is none elſe beſides me; evil is come upon her, and ſhe knows not from whence it comes, and miſchief is fallen upon her, and ſhe hath not been able to put it off, and deſolation is come upon her ſuddenly, which ſhe did not foreſee.* Hab. 2. 11. Iſa. 47. 7, 8, 11.

3. *Contempt of God and his Laws.* That we read of *v* 4. where the *Prophet* ſpeaks by an *Irony* to them, *Come to* Bethel *and tranſgreſs*, &c. he knew well enough they were reſolved to do it, let *God* or the *Prophet* ſay what they pleaſed. For theſe *Kine of* Baſhan were all for the *Calves* of *Dan* and *Bethel*, and ſome think that is the reaſon of the title that is given them. Theſe great men of *Samaria* thought it beneath them to own *Religion* any further than it was ſubſervient to their civil intereſts. They were all of *Jeroboams Religion*, who looked on it as a meer *politick thing*, and fit to advance his own deſigns by. I am afraid there are too many at this day who are ſecretly of his mind, and think it a piece of *wiſdom* to be ſo: *Bleſſed God*, that men ſhould be ſo wiſe to deceive themſelves, and go down with ſo much diſcretion

to Hell! Theſe are the Grave and retired *Atheiſts*, who, though they ſecretly love not *Religion*, yet their caution hinders them from talking much againſt it. But there is a ſort of men much more common than the other; the faculties of whoſe minds are ſo thin and aiery, that they will not bear the conſideration of any thing, much leſs of *Religion*; theſe throw out their bitter ſcoffs, and prophane jeſts againſt it. A thing never permitted that I know of in any civilized Nation in the world; whatſoever their *Religion* was, the reputation of *Religion* was alwayes preſerved ſacred: *God* himſelf would not ſuffer the *Jews* to ſpeak evil of other *Gods* though they were to deſtroy all thoſe who tempted them to the worſhip of them. And ſhall we ſuffer the moſt excellent and reaſonable *Religion* in the world, *viz.* the *Chriſtian*, to be profaned by the unhallowed mouths of any who will venture to be damned, to be accounted witty? If their enquiries were deeper, their reaſon ſtronger, or their arguments more perſwaſive, than of thoſe who have made it their utmoſt care and buſineſs to ſearch into theſe things, they ought to be allowed a fair hearing; but for men who pretend to none of theſe things, yet ſtill to make Religion the object of their *ſcoffs* and *raillery*, doth not become the gravity of a Nation profeſſing wiſdom to permit it, much leſs the ſobriety of a people profeſsing *Chriſtianity*. In the mean time ſuch perſons may know that wiſe men may be argued out of a *Religion* they own, but none

none but *Fools* and *mad men* will be *droll'd* out of it. Let them firſt try whether they can laugh men out of their Eſtates, before they attempt to do it out of their hopes of an eternal happineſs. And I am ſure it will be no comfort to them in another world, that they were accounted *Wits* for deriding thoſe miſeries which they then feel and ſmart under the ſeverity of: it will be no *mitigation* of their *flames* that they go *laughing* into them; nor will they endure them the better becauſe they would not believe them. But while this is ſo prevailing a *humour* among the vain men of this Age and Nation, what can we expect but that *God* ſhould by remarkable and ſevere judgements, ſeek to make men more ſerious in *Religion*, or elſe make their *hearts to ake*, and their *joynts to tremble*, as he did *Belſhazzars*, when he could find nothing elſe to carouſe in but the *veſſels* of the *Temple*. And when men ſaid in the Prophet *Zephany*, Zeph. 1. chap. 1. 12. *that God neither did good nor evil*, preſently 13, 14, it follows, *therefore their goods ſhall become a booty, and* 15. *their houſes a deſolation: the day of the Lord is near, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and diſtreſs, a day of waſteneſs and deſolation*; as it is with us at this time. Thus we ſee how ſad the parallel hath been not only in the *judgements* of *Iſrael*, but in the *ſins* likewiſe which have made thoſe judgements ſo ſevere.

4. The ſeverity of the judgement appears not only from the *Cauſes*, but from the *Author* of it. *I have overthrown ſome of you as God overthrew* Sodom

and

and Gomorrah. *God* challenges the execution of his juſtice to himſelf, not only in the great day, but in his judgement here in the world. *Shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* When *God* is pleaſed to puniſh men for their ſins, the execution of his juſtice is as agreeable to his nature now, as it will be at the end of the world. We all know that he may do it if he pleaſe, and he hath told us, that *he doth* and *will do it*; and we know withall, that without ſuch remarkable ſeverities, the world will hardly be kept in any awe of him. We do not find that love doth ſo much in the world as fear doth, there being ſo very few perſons of tractable and ingenuous ſpirits. It is true of too many, what *Lactantius* obſerves of the *Romans*, *Nunquam Dei meminerunt, niſi dum in malis ſunt, they ſeldom think of God, but when they are afraid of him.* And there is not only this reaſon as to particular perſons why *God* ſhould puniſh them, but there is a greater as to communities, and bodies of men; for although *God* ſuffers wicked men to eſcape puniſhment here, as he often doth; yet he is ſure not to do it in the life to come; but communities of men can never be puniſhed but in this world; and therefore the juſtice of *God* doth often diſcover it ſelf in theſe common calamities, to keep the world in ſubjection to him, and to let men ſee that neither the *multitude* of their *aſſociates*, nor the *depth* of their *deſigns*, nor the *ſubtilty* of their *Councils* can ſecure them from the omnipotent arm of

Amos 3 6.

Lact. l. 2. c. 11.

Divine

Divine Juſtice, when he hath determined *to viſit their tranſgreſſions with rods*, and *their iniquities with ſtripes*. But when he doth all this, yet his *loving kindneſs doth he not utterly take from them*: for in the midſt of all his judgements he is pleaſed to remember mercy; of which we have a remarkable inſtance in the Text, for when *God* was overthrowing Cities, yet *he pluckt the inhabitants as firebrands out of the burning*: and ſo I come from the *ſeverity* of *God*,

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O let us not then fruſtrate the deſign of ſo much ſeverity mixed with ſo great mercy: let it never be

ſaid, that neither judgements nor kindneſs will work upon us: that neither our deliverance from the *Peſtilence* which *walks in darkneſs*, nor from the *flames* which ſhine as the *noon-day*, will awaken us from that *Lethargy* and ſecurity we are in by our ſins: but let *God* take what courſe he pleaſes with us, we are the ſame incorrigible people ſtill that ever we were. For we have cauſe enough for our mourning and lamentation this day, (if *God* had not ſent new calamities upon us) that we were no better for thoſe we had undergone before. We have ſurfetted with mercies, and grown ſick of the kindneſs of Heaven to us, and when *God* hath made us ſmart for our fulneſs and wantonneſs, then we grew ſullen and murmured and diſputed againſt Providence, and were willing to do any thing but repent of our ſins and reform our lives. It is not many years ſince *God* bleſſed us with great and undeſerved bleſsings, which we then thought our ſelves very thankful for; but if we had been really ſo, we ſhould never have provoked him who beſtowed thoſe favours upon us in ſo great a degree as we have done ſince. Was this our requital to *him* for reſtoring our *Soveraign*, to *rebell* the more againſt Heaven? Was this our thankfulneſs, for removing the *diſorders* of *Church* and *State*, to bring them into our *lives*? Had we no other way of trying the continuance of *Gods goodneſs* to us, but by exerciſing his patience by our greater provocations? As though we had reſolved

ſolved to let the world ſee, there could be a more unthankful and diſobedient people than the *Jews* had been. Thus we ſinned with as much ſecurity and confidence, as though we had blinded the eyes, or bribed the juſtice, or commanded the power of Heaven: When *God* of a ſudden like one highly provoked drew forth the ſword of his deſtroying *Angel*, and by it cut off ſo many thouſands in the midſt of us. Then we fell upon our knees, and begg'd the mercy of Heaven that our lives might be ſpared, that we might have time to amend them: but no ſooner did our fears abate, but our devotion did ſo too, we had ſoon forgotten the promiſes we made in the day of our diſtreſs, and I am afraid it is at this day too true of us which is ſaid in the *Revelations* of thoſe who had eſcaped the ſeveral plagues which ſo many had been deſtroyed by. *And the reſt of the men which were not killed by theſe Plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands.* For if we had not greedily ſuckt in again the poiſon we had only laid down while we were begging for our lives, if we had not returned with as great fury and violence as ever to our former luſts, the removing of one judgement had not been as it were only to make way for the coming on of another. For the *grave* ſeemed to cloſe up her mouth, and *death* by degrees to withdraw himſelf, that the *Fire might* come upon the *Stage*, to act its part too in the *Tragœdy* our ſins have made among us: and I pray *God* this may be the

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laſt *Act* of it. Let us not then provoke *God* to find out new methods of vengeance, and make experiments upon us of what other unheard of ſeverities may do for our cure. But let us rather meet *God* now by our repentance, and returning to him, by our ſerious humiliation for our former ſins, and our ſtedfaſt reſolutions to return no more to the practice of them. That, that much more dangerous *infection* of our ſouls may be cured as well as that of our bodies, that the impure *flames* which burn within may be extinguiſhed, that all our *luxuries* may be retrenched, our debaucheries puniſhed, our vanities taken away, our careleſs indifferency in Religion turned into a greater ſerioufneſs both in the profeſſion and the practiſe of it. So will *God* make us a happy and proſperous, when he finds us a more righteous and holy Nation. So will *God* ſucceed all your endeavours for the honour and intereſt of that people whom you repreſent. So may he add that other Title to the reſt of thoſe you have deſerved for your Countries good, to make you *Repairers of the breaches of the City* as well as of the *Nation*, and *reſtorers of paths to dwell in*: So may that *City* which now ſits ſolitary like a *Widow*, have her tears wiped off, and her beauty and comelineſs reſtored unto her. Yea ſo may her preſent ruines, in which ſhe now lyes *buried*, be only the forerunners of a more joyfull *reſurrection*. In which though the *body* may remain the *ſame*, the *qualities* may be ſo altered, that its preſent deſolation may be only

only the puting off its former inconveniencies, weakneſs, and deformities, that it may riſe with greater glory, ſtrength and proportion: and to all her other qualities, may that of *incorruption* be added too, at leaſt till the general conflagration. And I know your great *Wiſdom* and *Juſtice* will take care, that thoſe who have ſuffered by the ruines, may not likewiſe ſuffer by the riſing of it, that the glory of the *City* may not be laid upon the *tears* of the *Orphans* and *Widows*, but that its foundations may be ſetled upon Juſtice and Piety. That there be no complaining in the Streets for want of righteouſneſs, nor in the City for want of *Churches*, nor in the *Churches* for want of a ſetled maintenance. That thoſe who attend upon the ſervice of *God* in them may never be tempted to betray their Conſciences to gain a livelihood, nor to comply with the factious humors of men that they may be able to live among them. And thus when the City through the bleſsing of Heaven ſhall be built again, may it be a habitation of *Holineſs* towards *God*, of *Loyalty* towards our *Gracious King and his Succeſſours*, of *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs* towards men, of *Sobriety*, and *Peace*, and *Unity* among all the *Inhabitants*, till not Cities and Countries only, but the World and time it ſelf ſhall be no more. Which *God* of his infinite mercy grant through the merits and mediation of his *Son*, to whom with the *Father* and *Eternal Spirit*, be all Honour and Glory for evermore.

FINIS.